

No. 288 Rs

Bikal the Terrible
and The Tiger-Tamers

– TALES FROM
MADHYA PRADESH

BIKAL THE TERRIBLE

There are many who love to tell a story and many more who love to listen to one. And each time a story is retold, it acquires a new colour and a fresh dimension.

The grandmother who heard a story as a little girl from her grandmother, tells the same story to her grandchild but with a few embellishments of her own. The traveller from a distant land who happens to hear a story in the course of his travels, later tells it to his own people, modifying it to make it more dramatic or more acceptable to his audience. That is how stories which had first been told centuries ago have been kept alive and why we find recurring themes in the tales told in different regions separated by hundreds of miles.

The stories in this Amar Chitra Katha are adapted from two popular tribal tales of Madhya Pradesh.

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BIKAL, THE TERRIBLE



ONE NIGHT AS HE WAS PROWLING OUTSIDE A MERCHANT'S HOUSE —

I AM GOING OUT, FATHER.

AT THIS HOUR ?

AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF BIKAL * ?

?

WITH BIKAL AROUND, EVEN THE BRAVEST OF MEN THINK TWICE BEFORE VENTURING OUT IN THE NIGHT.

WHO IS THIS BIKAL ?

AS THE TIGER WALKED AWAY...

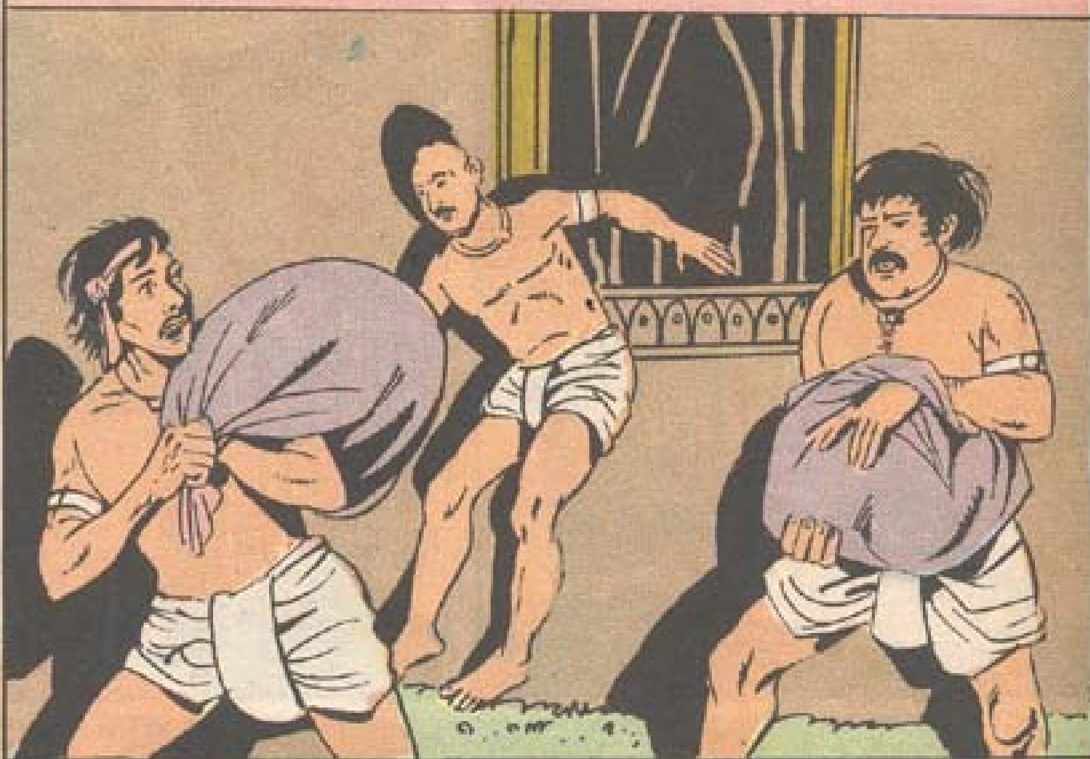


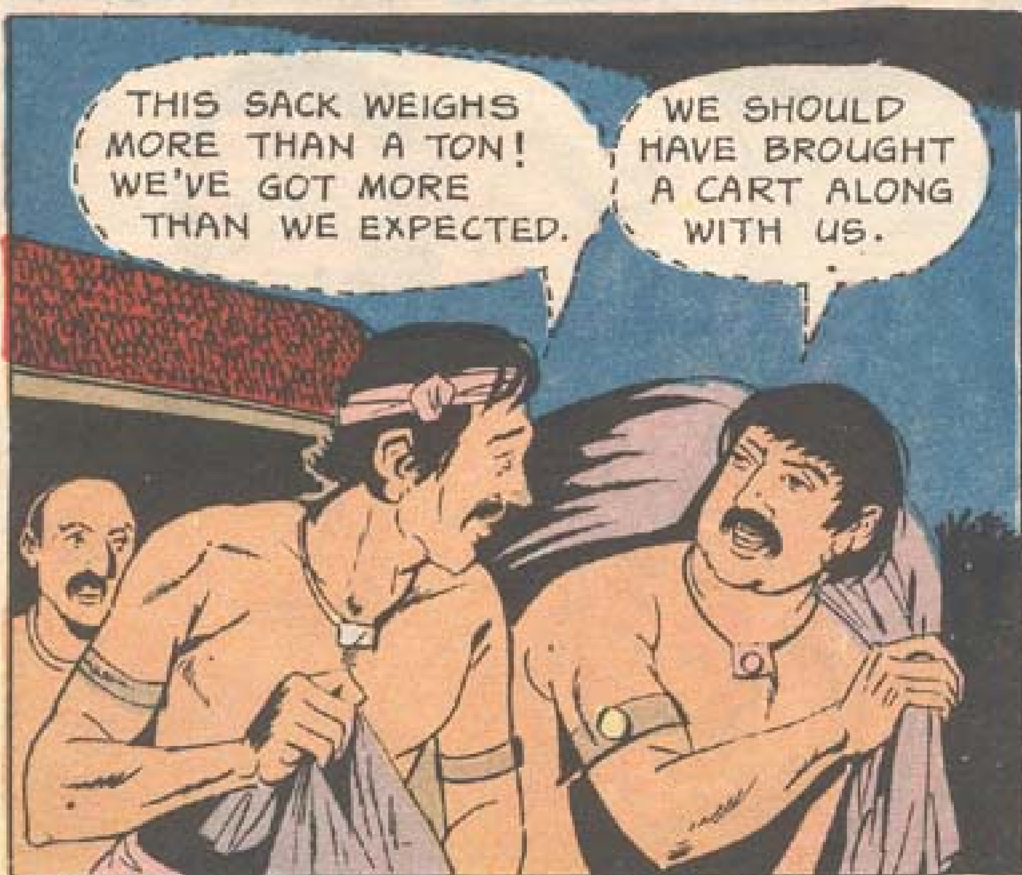
* A WORD USED BY THE TRIBALS FOR THAT WHICH IS TO BE FEARED, IN THIS CASE THE PROWLING TIGER.


...AND WAS FRIGHTENED.
I'D BETTER HIDE SOMEWHERE FOR THE NIGHT ...BUT WHERE?


AH, THAT SHED!

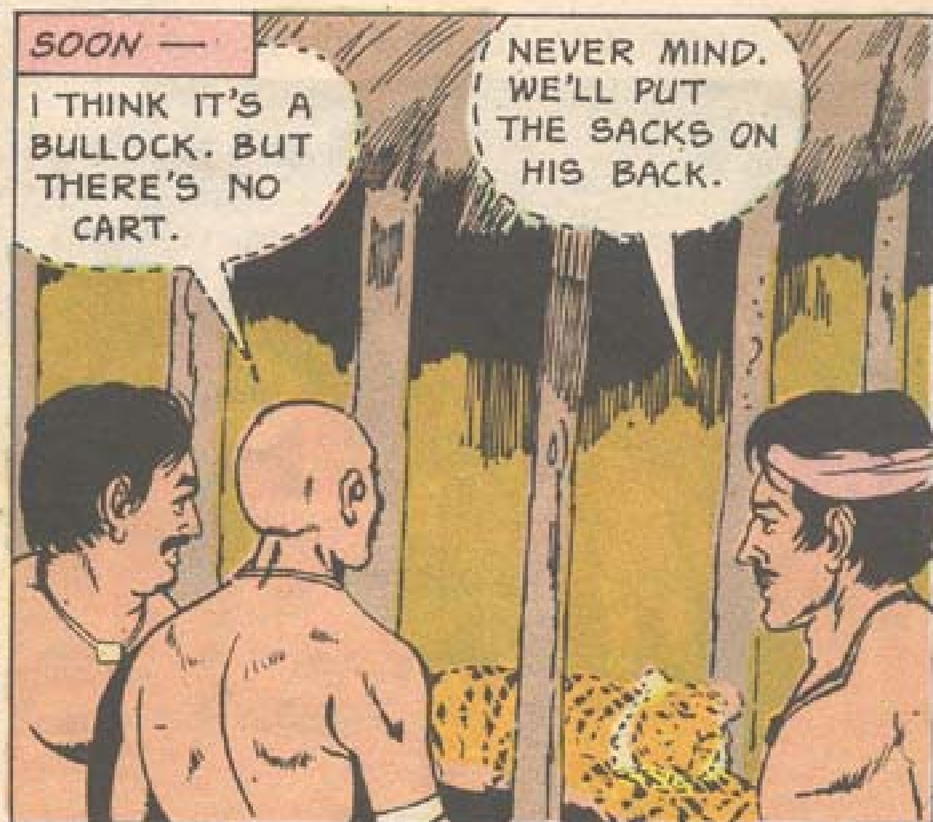

LATER THAT NIGHT, THIEVES BROKE INTO THE HOUSE OF THE MERCHANT...


...AND CAME AWAY WITH TWO SACKS OF LOOT.


THIS SACK WEIGHS MORE THAN A TON! WE'VE GOT MORE THAN WE EXPECTED.
WE SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT A CART ALONG WITH US.


WE MIGHT FIND ONE IN THAT SHED.


IT'S PITCH-DARK IN THERE.
ALL THE BETTER FOR US.


SOON —
I THINK IT'S A BULLOCK. BUT THERE'S NO CART.
NEVER MIND. WE'LL PUT THE SACKS ON HIS BACK.


WHILE THEY TALKED THE TIGER WAS FAST ASLEEP...


...AND IN THE MIDST OF A NIGHTMARE.


HELP! BIKAL HAS CAUGHT ME!




AS THE LOOT WAS LOADED ON HIS BACK—
WHA-AT!


NO ORDINARY MAN WOULD DARE TREAT ME SO. MY WORST FEARS HAVE COME TRUE!

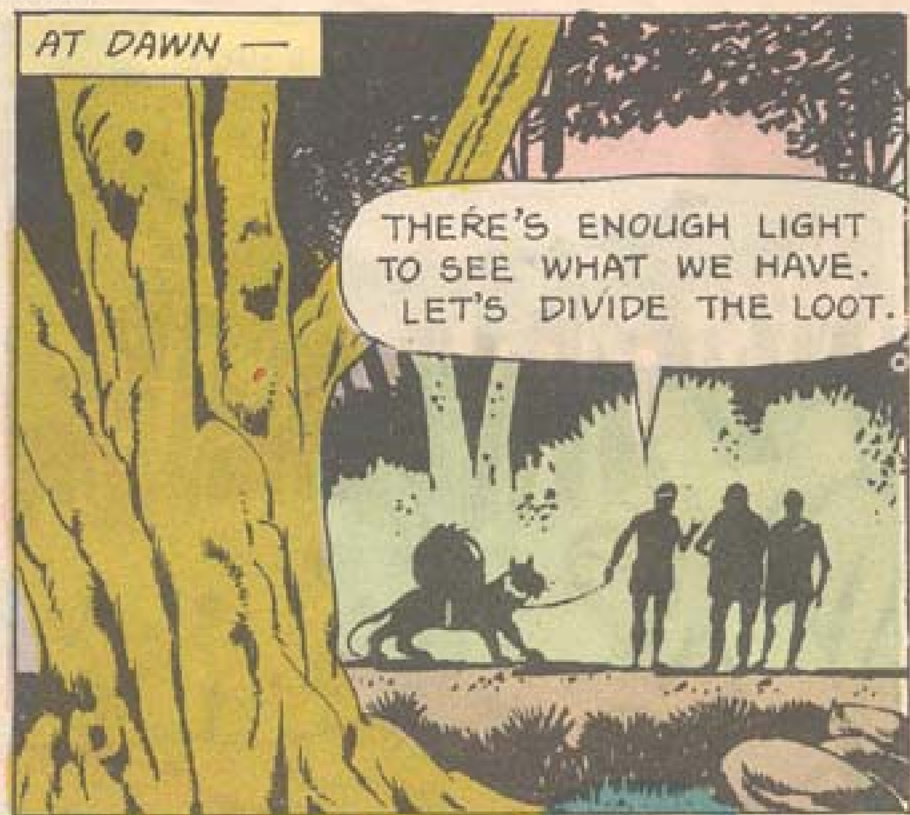

I AM IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE TERRIBLE BIKAL AND HIS FRIENDS!


OOOOH! THE LOAD IS HEAVY. BUT I DARE NOT PROTEST.


WE ARE RICH MEN NOW. I'LL BUY AS MANY GOATS AS I CAN WITH MY SHARE.
I'LL BUY SOME LAND.


AS FOR ME, I WILL GET MARRIED.


I-I WONDER WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME.


AT DAWN —
THERE'S ENOUGH LIGHT TO SEE WHAT WE HAVE. LET'S DIVIDE THE LOOT.


YES, I WOULD LIKE TO BUY THE GOATS AS SOON A-AS...!


F-FRIENDS, AM I DREAMING?
N-NO...
IT'S A... IT'S A...


TIGER!




OH, WHAT A FOOL I HAVE MADE OF MYSELF! THEY WERE JUST MEN — ORDINARY MEN!


EVERYONE WILL LAUGH AT ME IF THEY COME TO HEAR OF THIS.


AS HE WAS WANDERING AROUND, FEELING RATHER ASHAMED OF HIMSELF, THE BUNDLE ON HIS BACK GOT CAUGHT BETWEEN TWO ROCKS.
OOOF! NOW HOW DO I GET OUT?


JUST THEN HE SPOTTED A COWHERD.
O COWHERD...


DON'T RUN AWAY. I WON'T EAT YOU.
IT'S BIKAL!


PLEASE COME BACK. SOMEBODY HAS TIED THIS SACK ON MY BACK. PLEASE TAKE IT DOWN. I SWEAR I WON'T HARM YOU.


THE SACK IS FULL OF MONEY. YOU CAN HAVE ALL OF IT.
MONEY!

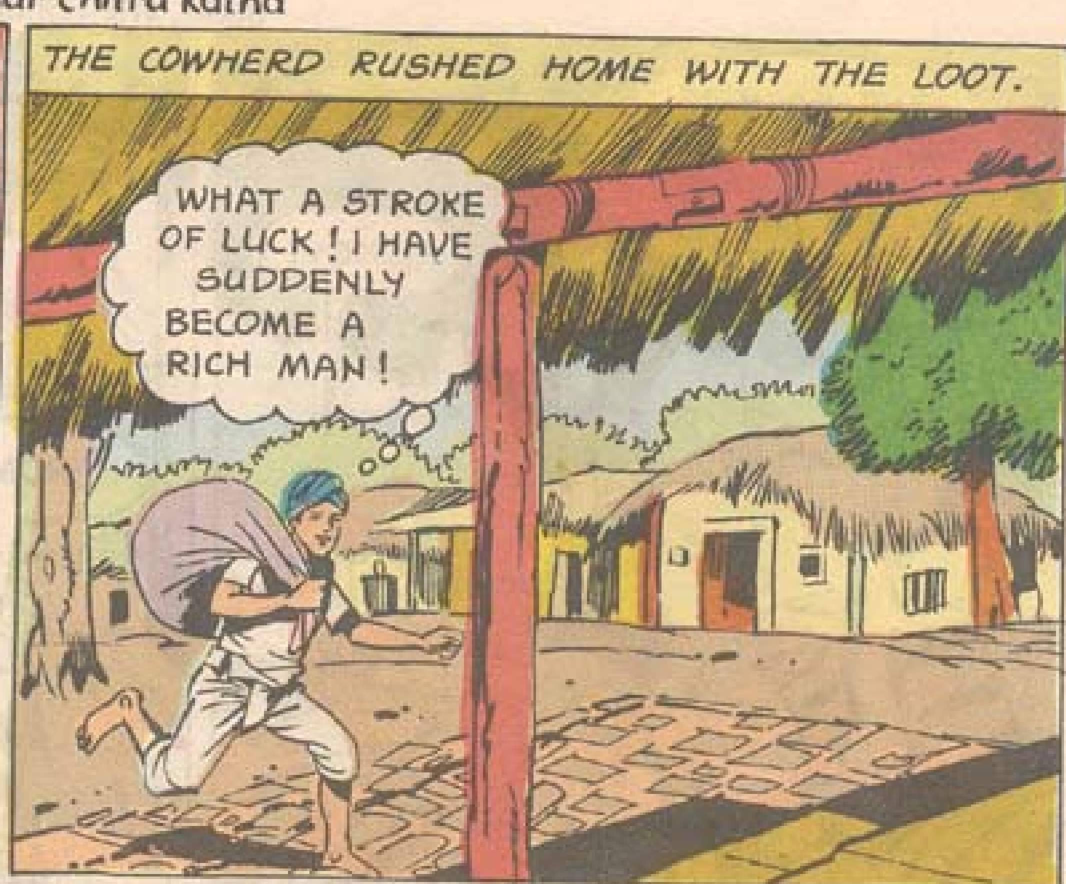

YOU PROMISE NOT TO HURT ME?
I PROMISE.


TELL ME, HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF THAT BIKAL!

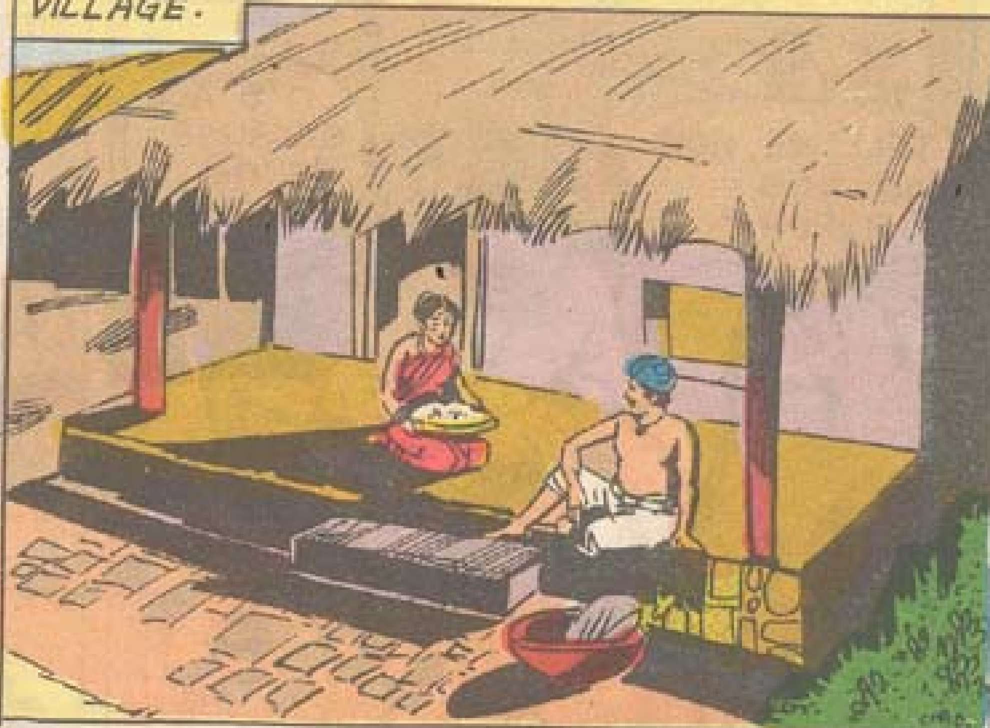

THE COWHERD WAS PUZZLED.
BUT... BUT... YOU ARE A... HOW COULD BIKAL...


NEVER UTTER THAT WORD AGAIN, DO YOU HEAR? I HATE THE SOUND OF IT.


DON'T GET ANGRY. I-I'LL NEVER UTTER THAT NAME AGAIN.
IF YOU DO I'LL COME AND DEVOUR YOU. NOW YOU MAY GO.


THE COWHERD RUSHED HOME WITH THE LOOT.
WHAT A STROKE OF LUCK! I HAVE SUDDENLY BECOME A RICH MAN!

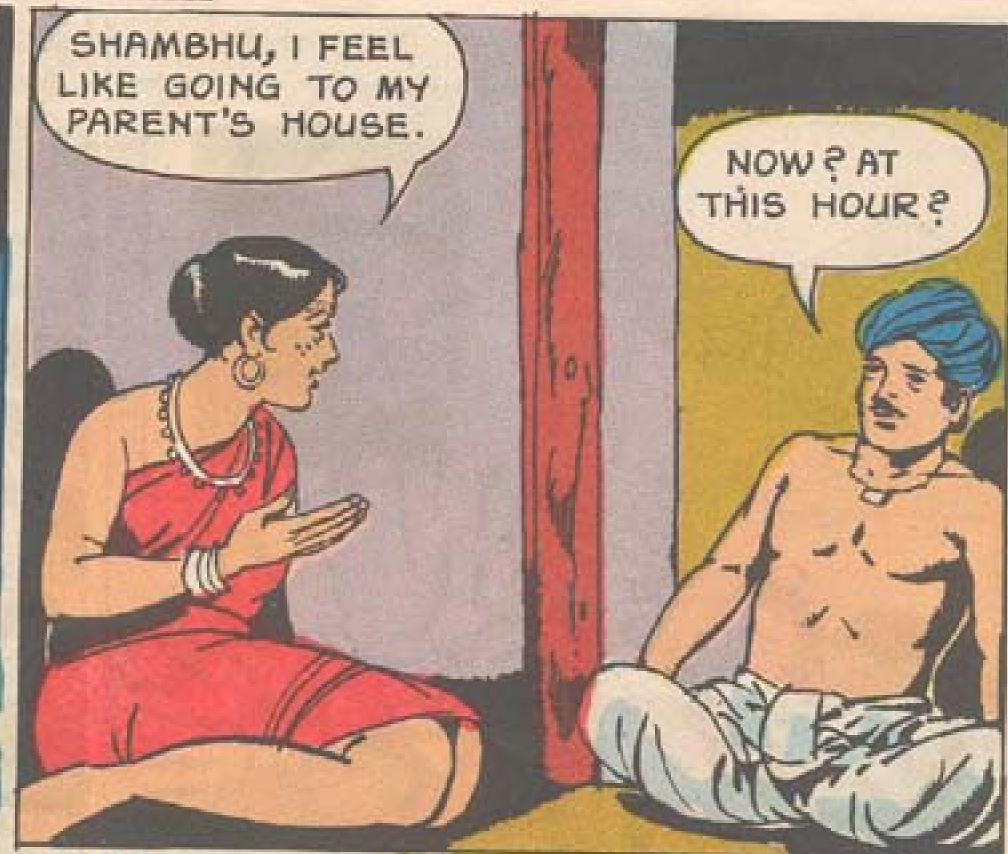

MONTHS PASSED. HE BOUGHT COWS AND BUFFALOES...


...AND MARRIED BHAGWATI, THE MOST INTELLIGENT, HARD-WORKING GIRL IN THE VILLAGE.


ONE NIGHT—
SHAMBHU, HOW DID YOU BECOME SO RICH?
IT'S A LONG STORY, BHAGO. THERE WAS THIS BIKAL...


AS SHAMBHU FINISHED NARRATING THE STORY, THE TIGER HAPPENED TO STROLL BY.

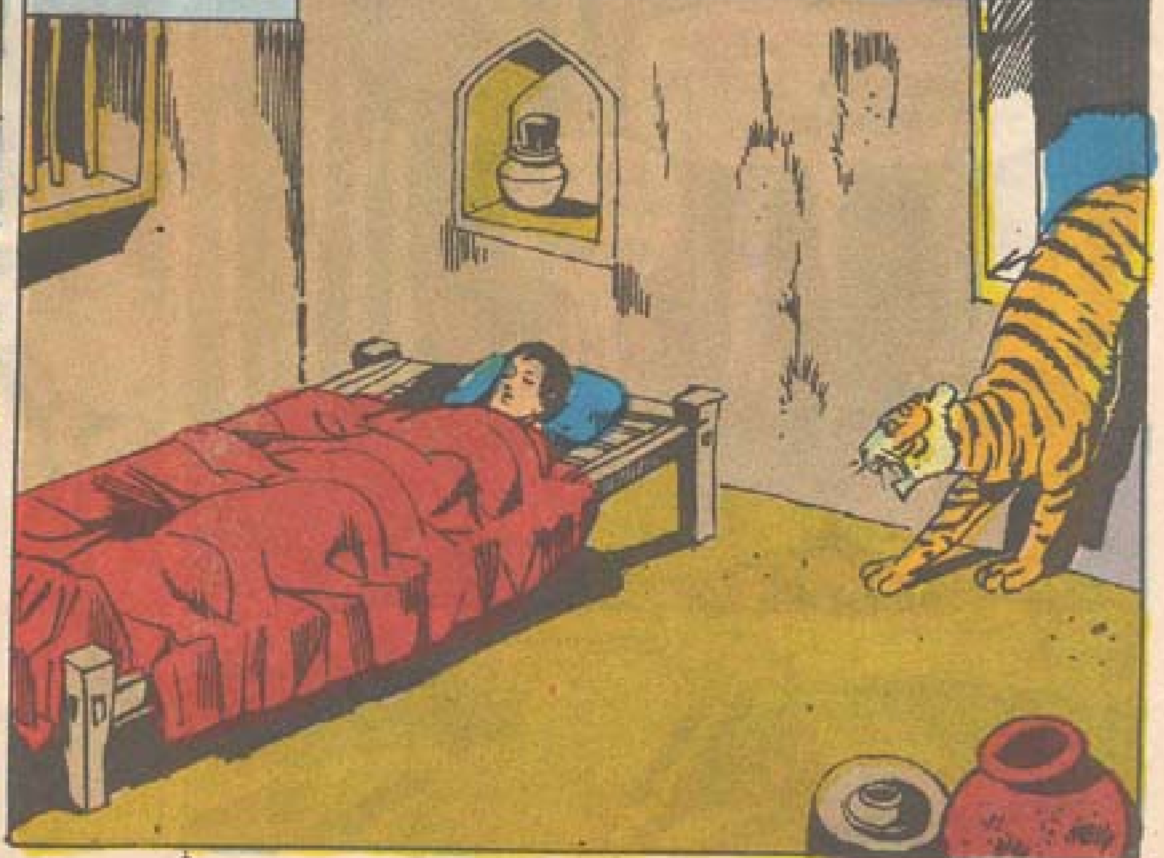

IT'S THE COWHERD WHO HELPED ME ! I'LL GO AND MEET HIM .


SHAMBHU, I FEEL LIKE GOING TO MY PARENT'S HOUSE.
NOW ? AT THIS HOUR ?


AREN'T YOU AFRAID OF BIKAL ?
GRR-RRR ! HE HAS UTTERED THE FORBIDDEN WORD.


I WON'T SPARE HIM NOW.


LET'S GO TOMORROW MORNING, BHAGO.
OH, ALL RIGHT.


LATER THAT NIGHT THE TIGER CREPT INTO THE HOUSE ...


...STEALTHILY LIFTED THE SLEEPING SHAMBHU...


...AND LEFT WITHOUT DISTURBING BHAGWATI.


HE CARRIED THE COWHERD TO THE FOREST. THERE, HE THREW HIM DOWN WITH A THUD.
OW! WHERE AM I? WHAT HAPPENED?


OH! IT'S YOU...
YES, YOU BROKE YOUR PROMISE SO I AM GOING TO EAT YOU.

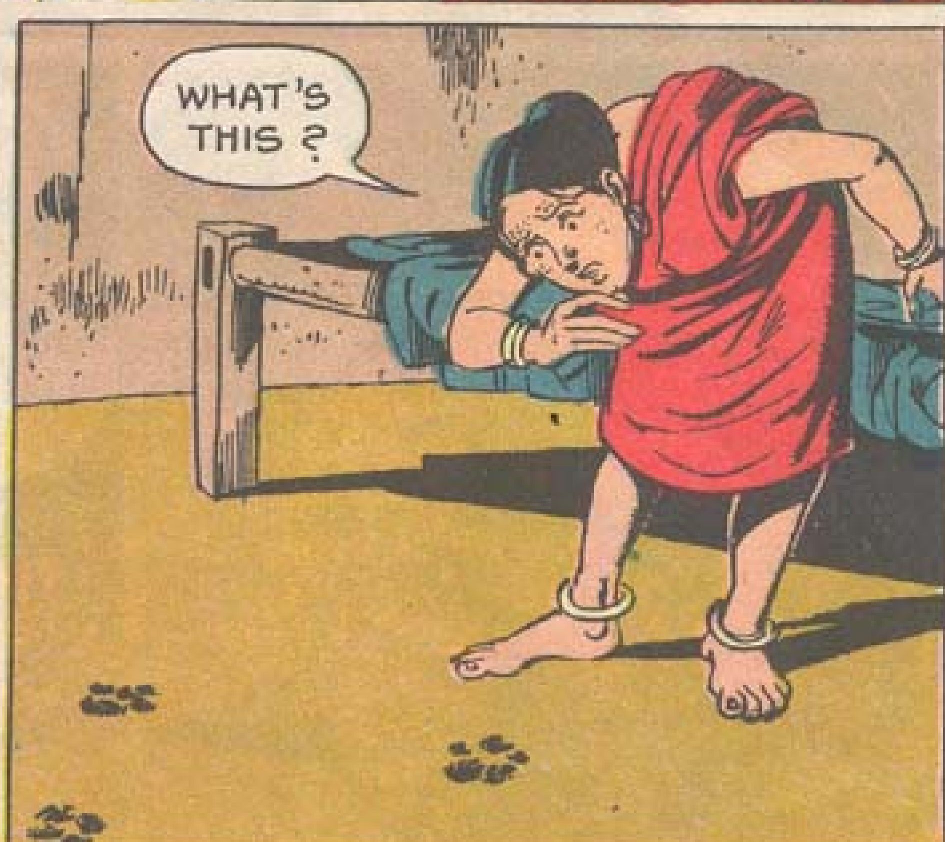

WAIT! EAT ME BY ALL MEANS BUT IN THE MORNING.
WHY NOT NOW?


MY FLESH IS TOUGH NOW BECAUSE OF THE COLD, BUT IT WILL BECOME TENDER AND WARM WITH THE MORNING SUN.


JUST THINK IT OVER! TO ME IT'S ALL THE SAME WHETHER YOU EAT ME NOW OR A FEW HOURS LATER. BUT TO YOU, IT WOULD MEAN A TASTIER MEAL.
ALL RIGHT, WE'LL WAIT.


I HAVE GAINED TIME. NOW LET'S HOPE BHAGO NOTICES MY ABSENCE AND ARRANGES FOR MY RESCUE.


MEANWHILE BHAGWATI HAD INDEED DISCOVERED HER HUSBAND'S ABSENCE.
WHERE HAS HE GONE?


WHAT'S THIS?


HAS A TIGER CARRIED HIM AWAY? IF THAT'S THE CASE, I'LL HAVE TO ACT QUICKLY TO SAVE HIM.


SHE THOUGHT OF A PLAN AND SET TO WORK ON IT.
... I'LL ALSO NEED A CUDGEL AND A DRUM TO FRIGHTEN THE WILD ANIMALS...


SOMETIME LATER, THE TIGER, WHO WAS PATIENTLY WAITING FOR THE SUN TO RISE, HEARD A WEIRD SOUND.
THAK CHHANNAN CHHANN DHAM
CHOOM CHOOM CHOOM CHOOM


WH... WHAT'S THAT ?
DRUMBEATS! THE SOUND OF ANKLETS! COULD IT BE BHAGO?


THAK CHHANNAN THAK DHAK
WHY DON'T YOU ANSWER? IS IT... IS IT... B... BIKAL?
I AM SURE IT IS!


I MUST LET HER KNOW I'M HERE.


ANSWER ME! IS IT BIKAL?


YES, IT IS BIKAL!


THAT WAS MY HUSBAND'S VOICE! HE'S ALIVE!


THERE HE IS! ...OH, THE TIGER IS WITH HIM TOO.


THE TIGER THINKS I AM BIKAL! AND HE'S TERRIFIED! GOOD! I'LL PLAY UPON THAT!


WHO'S THERE? ARE THERE ANY TIGERS AROUND FOR ME TO EAT?


HE'S LOOKING FOR TIGERS TO EAT! WHAT SHOULD I DO?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?


AHA! I CAN SMELL A TIGER!


PLEASE HELP ME. IF YOU DO, I WON'T EAT YOU.
WELL... I'LL TRY. JUST LIE DOWN AND KEEP STILL.


SPEAK UP! HAVE YOU SEEN ANY TIGERS WHICH I CAN EAT?
NO, THERE AREN'T ANY HERE. GO AWAY!


THEN WHAT'S THAT NEXT TO YOU?
THIS? OH— IT'S JUST A PILE OF DIRTY CLOTHES.


REALLY? I DON'T BELIEVE YOU! HIT THE PILE WITH A ROCK.


AS SHAMBHU HESITATED —
FRIEND, DO HIT ME... YOU MUST DO WHAT BIKAL SAYS IN ORDER TO SAVE ME.


BUT HIT ME GENTLY...


THE COWHERD HIT THE TIGER GENTLY ON THE HEAD. THEN —
HIT IT HARDER IF IT IS MERELY A PILE OF CLOTHES.
YES. HIT A LITTLE HARDER OTHERWISE...


THIS WENT ON FOR A WHILE.
HARDER! HARDER!
YES, A LITTLE HARDER...


AFTER A WHILE—
HARDER...
NO NEED DEAR, OUR FRIEND HAS SWOONED.


LEAVING THE WOUNDED TIGER TO ITS FATE THE CLEVER COUPLE HAPPILY RETURNED HOME.

THE TIGER-TAMERS







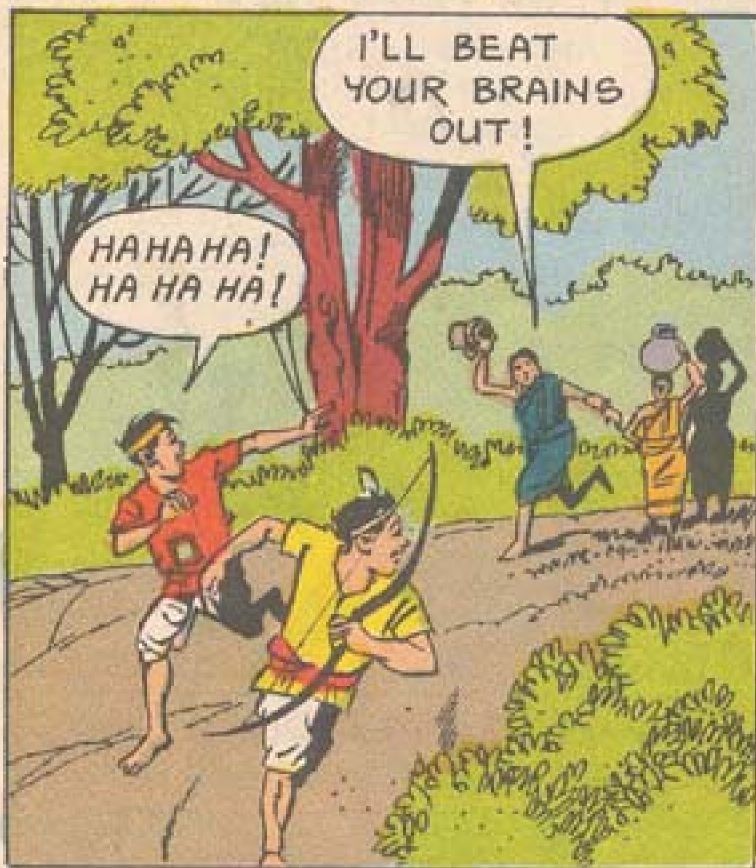







HAHAHAHA!
IT'S THOSE TWO RASCALS AGAIN.


YOU...YOU DEVILS!


I'LL BEAT YOUR BRAINS OUT!
HAHAHA! HA HA HA!


WHEN THEY WERE NOT SHOOTING AT WATERPOTS THEY WOULD BE SHOOTING AT CHICKENS.
CACKCACKCACK!
MY CHICKENS.

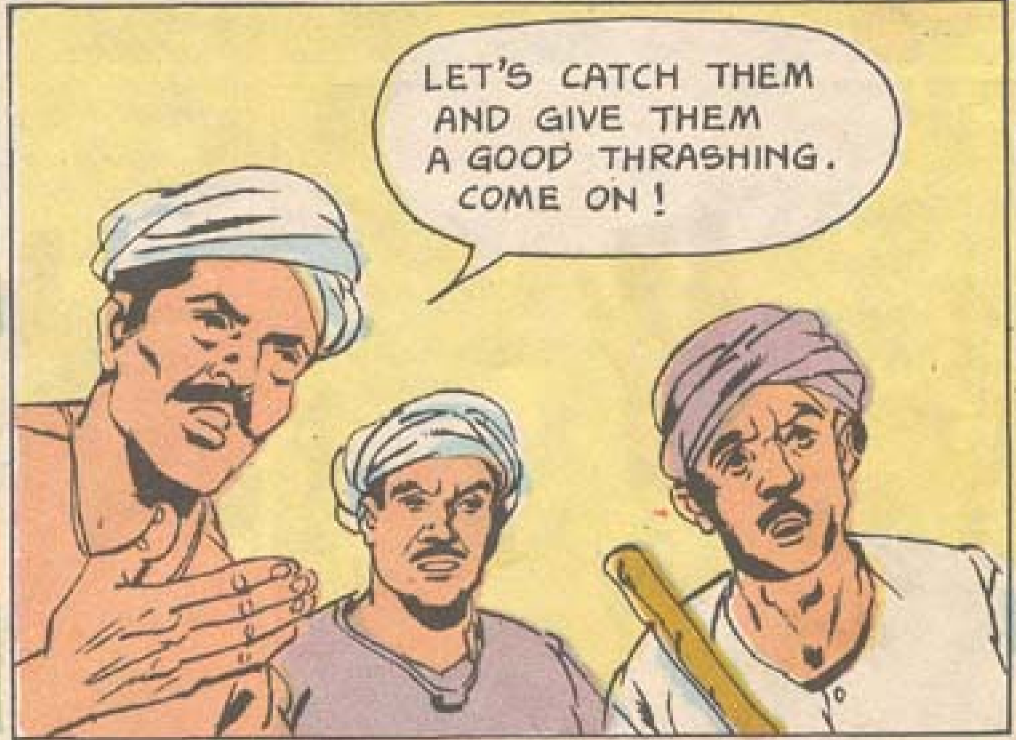

ONE DAY—
LET'S DRIVE THOSE GOATS AWAY.
YES. IT'LL BE GREAT FUN.


SHOOO!
SHOOO!


MY GOATS! MY GOATS!


THOSE BOYS ARE DRIVING AWAY MY GOATS!


THEY ARE BECOMING BOLDER AND BOLDER.


LET'S CATCH THEM AND GIVE THEM A GOOD THRASHING. COME ON!


THEY'RE COMING AFTER US. RUN!


THE BOYS ABANDONED THE GOATS AND TOOK OFF IN ANOTHER DIRECTION.
FOLLOW ME!


AFTER THEM!
WE SHOULDN'T LET THEM GO THIS TIME!


LET'S HEAD FOR THE JUNGLE.


CATCH THEM! CATCH THEM!

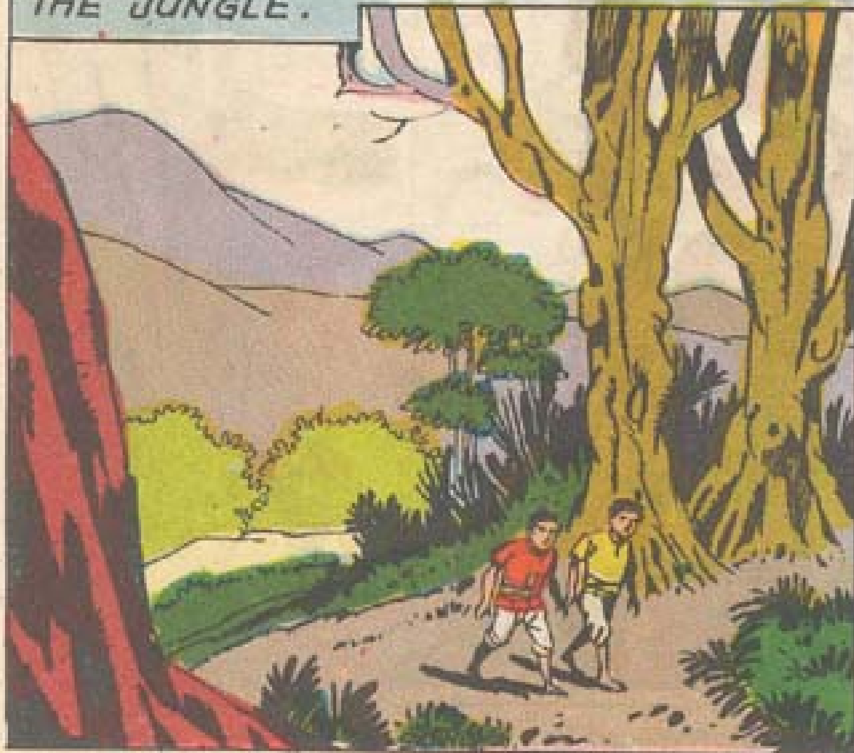

BUT THE BOYS OUTRAN THE VILLAGERS...


...AND KEPT RUNNING TILL THEY REACHED THE SAFETY OF THE JUNGLE.


THERE, EXHAUSTED, THEY THREW THEMSELVES ON THE GROUND.
PHEW!
HAH!


WHEN THEY HAD RECOVERED THEIR BREATH SOMEWHAT—
NOW WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
WE CAN ONLY GO FORWARD.


YOU ARE RIGHT. IT'LL TAKE SOME DAYS FOR THOSE PEOPLE TO COOL DOWN... IF AT ALL THEY DO COOL DOWN.


SO THE BOYS WENT DEEPER INTO THE JUNGLE.


THEY WALKED ON AND ON, THEN STOPPED DEAD...


...FOR SEATED IN THE MIDDLE OF THEIR PATH WAS AN ENORMOUS TIGER.


THE YOUNGER BOY SUDDENLY DARTED FORWARD...


...THREW HIMSELF ON THE TIGER'S BACK...


...AND CATCHING HOLD OF THE ANIMAL'S EARS PUSHED HIS HEAD DOWN. AT THE SAME TIME THE OLDER BOY GRABBED HIS TAIL.
GOT YOU!
?!


THE TIGER WAS STARTLED OUT OF HIS WITS.
ARRGH! WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHO HAS CAUGHT ME?


W-WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
WE ARE TIGER-HUNTERS.


WE NEED A TIGER TO PULL OUR PLOUGH.
YOU USE TIGERS TO PULL YOUR PLOUGH!


THERE MUST BE SOME MISTAKE. WHAT YOU NEED IS A PAIR OF BULLOCKS.
WHEN YOU PLOUGH WITH BULLOCKS YOU GET ONLY RICE AND SUCH CROPS...


...BUT WHEN YOU PLOUGH WITH TIGERS YOU GET GOLD AND SILVER.
IS-IS THAT SO?


WE HAVE ALREADY CAUGHT ONE TIGER, YOU ARE THE SECOND ONE.
THIS IS TERRIBLE.


LET'S SHOW HIM THE TIGER WE'VE ALREADY CAUGHT!








IF THEY'VE CAUGHT SUCH A NASTY-LOOKING FELLOW WHAT CHANCE HAVE I OF ESCAPING?


WHAT SHALL I DO? IF I DO ESCAPE, I'LL FEED A DOZEN TIGERS! OH! IF ONLY I COULD...




LOOK FRIENDS, IF IT'S GOLD AND SILVER YOU ARE AFTER, I CAN GIVE YOU HEAPS OF IT.


I HAVE KILLED AND EATEN SEVERAL PRINCES AND KINGS IN MY LIFETIME AND ALL THEIR GOLD IS LYING AROUND IN MY CAVE. I'LL BRING IT FOR YOU.


HOW DO WE KNOW THAT YOU AREN'T MAKING IT ALL UP JUST TO ESCAPE?


YES, HOW DO WE KNOW?
COME WITH ME TO MY CAVE IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.


THE TIGER, TREMBLING WITH FEAR, LED THE BOYS TO HIS CAVE.
THIS IS WHERE I LIVE. NOW PLEASE LET ME...






IF THEY THINK I AM GOING TO WAIT FOR THEM, THEY ARE MISTAKEN.


THE TIGER RAN AND RAN...


...TILL HE HAD LEFT THE CAVE AND THE BOYS FAR BEHIND.
THAT WAS A NARROW ESCAPE! BUT FOR MY QUICK THINKING I WOULD HAVE ENDED UP YOKED TO A PLOUGH FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.


NOW TO FEED THE TWELVE TIGERS.


HE STALKED...
...AND KILLED A SAMBHAR...


...AND WENT TO INVITE HIS FRIENDS TO EAT WITH HIM.


MEANWHILE INSIDE HIS CAVE —
NECKLACES! ARMLETS! CROWNS!
HE WAS NOT EXAGGERATING ABOUT THE WEALTH HERE.


THE TWO BOYS GATHERED TOGETHER ALL THE ORNAMENTS LYING IN AND AROUND THE CAVE ...


...AND NOT FINDING THE TIGER OUTSIDE...


...WENT ON THEIR WAY.


AS THEY WALKED ON—
ARE WE GOING TOWARDS THE VILLAGE OR AWAY FROM IT?
I DON'T KNOW.

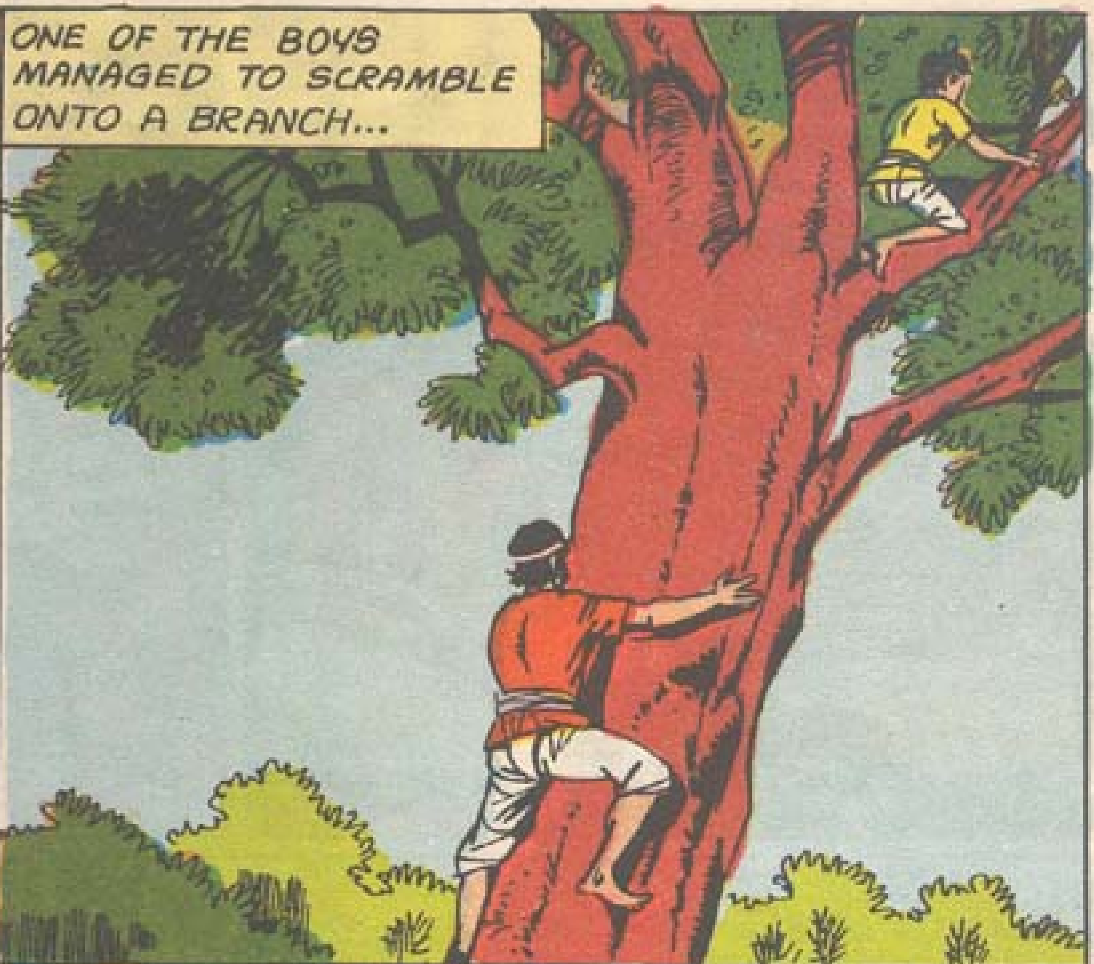

I THINK WE ARE LOST. TRY TO REMEMBER WHICH WAY WE CAME... WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?
TIGERS!


TEN— TWELVE— THIRTEEN OF THEM...


WE'RE DONE FOR IF THEY SEE US!


LET'S CLIMB UP THAT TREE.


FASTER!


ONE OF THE BOYS MANAGED TO SCRAMBLE ONTO A BRANCH...


...BUT THE OTHER WAS A LITTLE SLOW AND HE WAS STILL HALF-WAY UP THE TRUNK WHEN THE TIGERS CAME INTO VIEW.


I'D BETTER STAY WHERE I AM. IF I MOVE, IT'LL ATTRACT THEIR ATTENTION.


HERE IS THE SAMBHAR, MY FRIENDS.


WE'LL DRAG IT TO THAT TREE AND EAT IT THERE.





THE TIGERS MADE THEMSELVES COMFORTABLE UNDER THE TREE. THEN THE OLDEST AMONG THEM TURNED TO THE HOST.










HOW DID YOU ESCAPE?
I USED MY BRAINS...


I SAID TO THEM...!!
YEOOO E W!
?!
?!


OH, MY GOD!
?!
THUMP


GRAB THE OLD TIGER! DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!


GRAB HIM!
IT'S THEM!
WHAT!


MY FRIENDS, IT'S THOSE TWO MONSTERS I WAS TELLING YOU ABOUT!


RUN! RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!


SHAKEN TO THE CORE, THE TIGERS LEAPED OVER EACH OTHER AND FLED IN TERROR.


GOOD THINKING, BROTHER. I THOUGHT IT WAS THE END FOR ME.


ANYWAY, WHILE I WAS UP THERE I SAW THE ROUTE WE SHOULD TAKE TO GET BACK TO OUR VILLAGE.


SO LET'S GO BACK HOME. THOSE PEOPLE ARE SURE TO FORGIVE US WHEN THEY HEAR ABOUT OUR ADVENTURE AND SEE WHAT WE HAVE IN OUR BUNDLE.

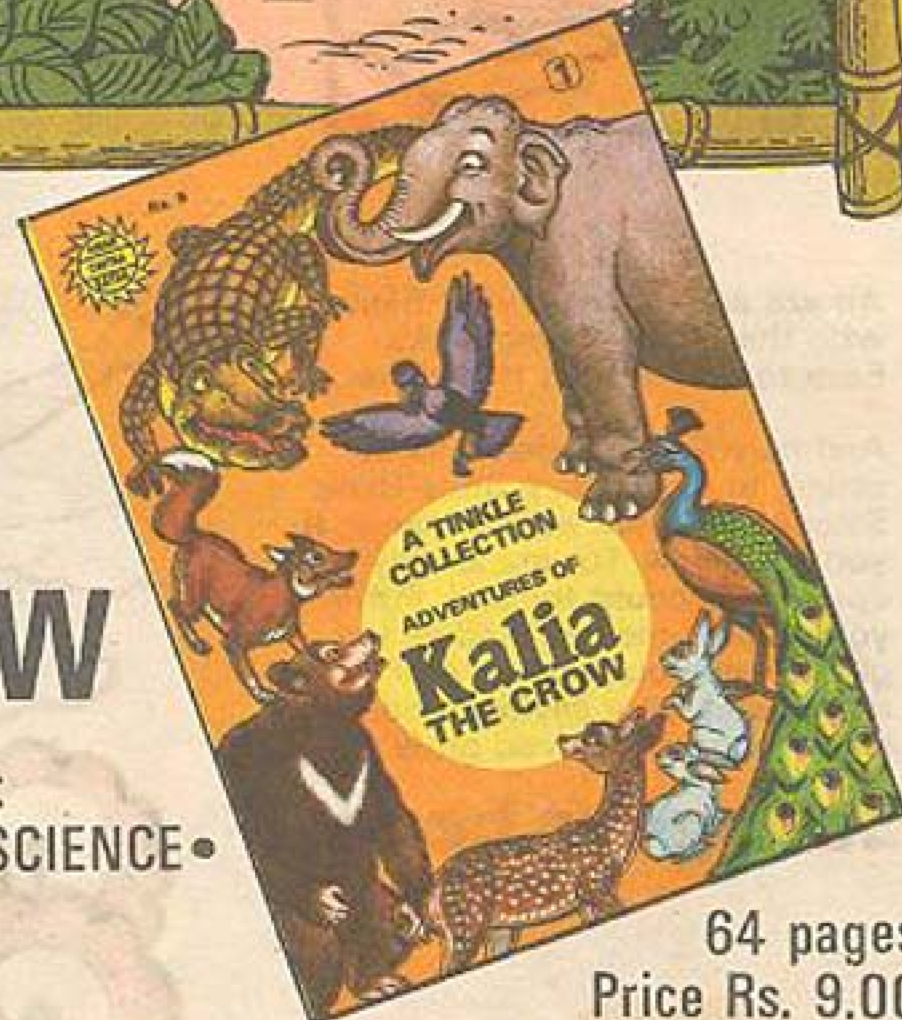






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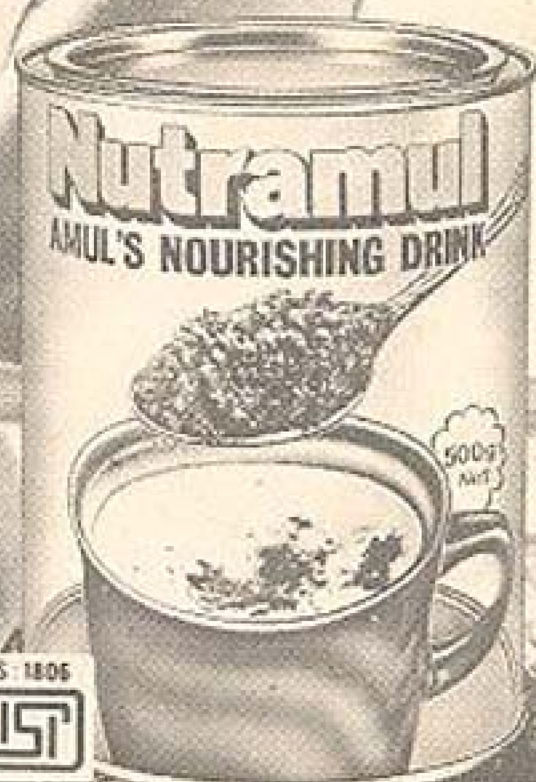
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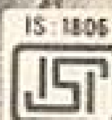
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